

HEPATITIS C: Side Effects

Arizona Department of Corrections
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program
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Most people who get treated for hepatitis C have side effects. These side effects can be mild or they can be severe. The same treatment can cause different side effects in different people. There is no way of knowing which side effects you might experience. If you have side effects from your hepatitis C treatment, fill out an HNR and discuss it with your health care provider.

General Guidelines

- If possible, take medication before bedtime.
- Taking a pain reliever about an hour before your interferon injection can help make the side effects less severe. Don't take any pain relievers until you check with your doctor.
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water or non-caffeinated low-sugar/diet beverages.
- Interferon can dry out the mouth, so regular check-ups and taking good care of your teeth and gums are important.
- Exercise regularly but lightly.
- Tell people close to you when you are taking your treatment. Tell them that it can affect your moods.
- Avoid things that can make you feel stressed, like too much caffeine, sugar, or nicotine.
- Learn ways to relax (see Common Sense Information Sheet on Anxiety).

- If you are taking medicine because you are depressed, be sure not to skip a dose. If your mood swings or depression gets very severe, or if you ever think about suicide, let a staff member know right away.
- Try to keep all of your appointments with health care staff.

Other Tips for Common Side Effects

Flu-like symptoms - use pain relievers as directed by your doctor, drink lots of fluids.

Skin irritation at the injection site - rotate the injection site.

Fatigue (feeling tired) - rest as much as possible, and get regular light to moderate exercise.

Nausea or vomiting - Crackers can help settle your stomach. Make sure to drink extra water to avoid dehydration if vomiting.

Not feeling hungry or not eating as much as usual - Eat small, healthy meals. Try to eat healthy meals even if you are not very hungry.

Not being able to sleep (insomnia) - refer to "Sleeping Guidelines" Information Sheet.

Dry/ itchy skin or a rash - Use over the counter lotion or hydrocortisone cream, use sunscreen as needed.

Stopping Treatment Over Side Effects

If you take less medicine or stop taking it, then your treatment might not work as well. You must talk with your health care provider about your side effects. You should not make these decisions on your own.